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EXCISE

XR 96-173

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: September 9, 1959

SUBJECT: Information Received from Latvian Defectors Bertholds and Plonis; Current Conditions in Latvia

PARTICIPANTS: [redacted]
EE - Valdemar N. L. Johnson
- Richard E. Johnson

SEP 15 1959

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Consulate General, St. John's
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Consulate General, Toronto

Date Document must be returned to the RM/R Central Files

In the course of visits to EE during July and August [redacted] furnished several reports of interest bearing on domestic conditions in Latvia.

[redacted] two memoranda (filed with the original of this memorandum of conversation) containing information on Latvia supplied by Messrs. Bertholds and Plonis, Latvian seamen who defected at St. John's, Newfoundland in June.

[redacted] some additional details orally concerning the defection. He referred to Bertholds' interview at St. John's with Soviet Embassy Secretary Selivanov (mentioned in St. John's June 27 cable) in the course of which Bertholds reportedly signed a statement expressing an interest in returning to the USSR, subsequently repudiated. [redacted] Bertholds claims that he accepted a cigarette from Selivanov at the beginning of the interview which Bertholds believed had a hypnotic effect and induced him to comply with Selivanov's commands.

[redacted] the Latvian community in Toronto has rallied strongly and promptly to the aid of Bertholds and Plonis, securing at least temporary asylum for them in a very short time and assuring them ample opportunity to locate a suitable position in Canada, as well as ample funds for their support in the meantime.

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[redacted] Bertholds and Plonis were asked whether friends and relatives in Latvia would be likely to encounter trouble after receiving letters and/or gift parcels from the U. S. The seamen replied that one can still assume that the authorities record the receipt of letters and packages from the U. S. for possible future reference. Individuals whose names appear on such a list would probably be viewed with suspicion and would encounter some degree of difficulty in efforts to obtain advancement in fields where Party or government approval is required. The seamen stated that a number of individuals in the U. S. appear to be mailing letters and/or packages to elderly retired persons for subsequent redistribution, on the presumption that the recipients are less likely to encounter harmful repercussions. While the seamen did not regard this tactic as foolproof, they seemed to consider it wiser than sending letters and/or packages directly to individuals employed somewhere in the bureaucracy or the state-operated economy.

In a subsequent visit, [redacted] left a copy of the "Latvian Information Bulletin", published by the Latvian Legation here, containing a three page summary of information obtained from Bertholds and Plonis (this document is also filed with the original of this memorandum of conversation).

Finally, [redacted] to call to our attention a book recently published in Riga, "Apsudzeto Sols" ("On Trial"), by Laimonis Purs. He stated that the book furnishes an unusually frank and critical description of the manner in which Latvia's Communist bureaucracy operates (EE is taking steps to obtain this book).

Attachments:

1. Two memoranda.
2. "Latvian Information Bulletin".

FORM M-120
4-16-47

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Attachment No. 1
~~ENCLOSURE~~

COMMUNICATION ADDRESSED TO

Memorandum of Conversation, 9/9/59, subj: Information Received from Latvian Defectors Bertholds and Plonis; Current Conditions in Latvia.

OFFICE
DIVISION } EUR:EE

FILE NO.

Memorandum [redacted]

July 8, 1959.

B6

Vilnis Bertholds (both about 21 years old)
Adolfs Plonis

I. Question: You say your plan to escape came about spontaneously, just after your craft stopped in the harbour of St. John, Newfoundland. Why did you escape, then?

Answer: (Bertholds) Everybody in Latvia feels like a prisoner. Everyone would take advantage of a chance to escape if the possibility arose.

II. Question: Where did you obtain information about the free world?

Answer: All people in Latvia secretly listen to the Voice of America.

III. Question: Is the young generation in Latvia somehow informed about the conditions of life before the communist occupation?

Answer: The older people are cautious about giving information about this matter because they fear getting into trouble. Nevertheless all people do talk about the fact that previously (i.e. during the times of free Latvia) the standard of agriculture was incomparably higher than now. In 1953, for instance, when spring ca the cattle were so weakened by starvation that they ha to be lifted by means of ropes. The young Latvian people draw their own conclusions from the parcels and letters arriving from abroad, and judge that the standard of living in other countries must be much higher than in the Soviet Union.

IV. Question: What are the relations between Latvians and Russians?

Answer: The Russians penetrate into Latvia in search of more profitable occupations. On our ship, registered in the harbor of Riga, only 11 of the 75 crew members were Latvians.
The Russians are disliked in Latvia. The young Latvians avoid the occupants. During several dances, Latvian girls have refused to dance with Russian soldiers, although there exist orders that they may not refuse.

(Explanatory note: In Latvia, the refugee boys say, there exists a "social order" that a Latvian girl has no right to refuse the first invitation to dance from a member of the glorious Russian army. However after the first dance she may refuse further invitations from the same soldier).

Vilnis Bertholds
Adolfs Plonis (cont.)

V. Question: Is Khrushchev popular?

Answer: The young people only in Latvia secretly call him the "fattened pig". (vepris in Latvian)

VI. Question: The Russians boast of their culture. What do the Latvians think about this matter?

Answer: Nobody believes in it. For instance, the Diesel motors all come from Germany. If a motor breaks down, the mechanic is threatened with prison.

(Explanatory note: In Riga, spare parts to repair these imported motors do not exist.)

VII. Question: What about wages? What are the possibilities for recreation.

Answer: Only Russians frequent the seaside resort near Riga. A room for two months costs about 2,000 rubles (without meals). A simple worker cannot even dream about it.
As concerns the wages of the seamen, there are two categories: one for service on shore, the other during actual navigation.

VIII. Question: And what about religion and churches?

Answer: We feel we are pagans. A religious education for the young is prohibited. They are afraid to go to church because there is always someone kneeling in deep reverence, his forehead touching the floor, but who at the same time is observing the others in order to give information to the police concerning all who are present.

Memorandum

"Free education" in Latvia exists only on paper. Upon graduation from the School of Navigation, the student must repay the government 15,000 rubles - the amount his education has allegedly cost the government. The wage of a ship's engineer is 850 rubles per month while on the high seas, and 450 while ashore. At the same time, a pair of shoes costs about 480 rubles on the black market.

Draft into the armed forces begins with 19 year olds. Service in the Navy is for 4 years, the infantry - 3 years. A number of youths attempt to avoid service in the armed forces by bribing the doctors. One of the escapees himself had paid a doctor 400 rubles, thus avoiding the draft. There are no Latvian units in the (Red) army. The Latvian youth are being sent to the eastern republics. There is a great number of the military in all towns of Latvia.

It is significant that both escapees call the streets of Riga by the names which existed during Latvia's independence. The new Soviet imposed street names are unpopular, especially with the older generation.

They know the meaning of the 18th of November. On that day they usually celebrate the "name day of Alexander" which falls on that date and is a good excuse for celebrating. In the country the people hope for war. In the towns, the workers fear nuclear weapo and are therefore more restrained in their hopes and expectations. Many listen to the Voice of America and have memorized all wave length In the vicinity of Newfoundland the politruk (political officer on the ship) turned off the radio in anger when he discovered that the crew was listening to the CBC news in Russian. Afterwards he would not allow them to listen even to music.

The Russians are disliked by everybody. At the school graduation ceremonies the Latvians boys started a fight with the Russians because the latter had beaten up a Latvian student. Drinking, carrousing, thefts, and murders are more or less daily routine, especially in Riga. Cheating the government is no longer considered theft, especially in regard to building materials transported by the government. Oftentimes prices of these stolen materials are even lower than in the government stores.

The Cheka (Secret Police) spies on everyone, everywhere. Sailors must obtain clearance before leaving for the high sea. Nothing can be hidden from Checka. "It reminds you of things you yourself have long forgotten". Of the 25 graduates of the School of Navigation, five were not permitted to sail for political reasons (their parents allegedly were unreliable). No recent deportations hav been observed, although in towns people still disappear singly. The escapees did not know anything about the deportations of 1941. However, according to them the mass deportations of 1949 were horrible involving the Red army. The Soviet soldiers reacted differently - some were brutal, but others were more human and even helped the victims to pack.

The most popular newspaper is Ligas Balss (Voice of Riga). Sometimes it even indulges in slight criticism. The quality of Latvi books is highly superior to the Russian editions.

The escapees told of many interesting occurrences in black market dealings, the black market being well organized. e.g., fishermen receive an all clear signal from the shore and sell their catch before docking. Fishing generally is profitable. Fishing boats are bought in Germany and the investment pays off after a few trips. Riga is very clean. The fine for throwing a cigarette butt is 25 rubles.

FORM M-120
4-18-47

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Attachment No. 2
~~ENCLOSURE~~

COMMUNICATION ADDRESSED TO

Memorandum of Conversation, 9/9/59, subj: Information Received from Latvian Defectors Bertholds and Plonis; Current Conditions in Latvia.

OFFICE
DIVISION

FILE NO.

Telephone RAndolph 6-8213

LATVIAN INFORMATION BULLETIN

4325 Seventeenth Street, N. W. LATVIAN LEGATION Washington 11, D. C.

No. 2/59. July 1959.

IN MEMORY OF JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Some may say that it is unrealistic and impractical not to recognize the enforced incorporation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the Soviet Union. We believe, however, that a despotism of the Soviet type cannot indefinitely perpetuate its rule over hundreds of millions of people who love God, who love their country, and who have a sense of personal dignity...

Let me also assure this: We do not look upon the conference table as a place where we surrender our principles, but rather as a place for making our principles prevail. That is our resolve - a resolve which I am confident is backed by the Congress and by the people of the United States.

(Excerpts from his statement before a Select Congressional Committee on Communist Aggression on November 30, 1953)

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Soviet census figures reveal that the loss of population caused by war and revolution was much greater than was generally assumed. The figures also throw some light on population changes in the Baltic countries under Soviet occupation.

KHRUSHCHEV IN RIGA..... 8

In his Riga speech Khrushchev critizes his Latvian underlings for "having turned sour on their jobs", and he advises the Baltic nations to abandon hope in the Western Powers to liberate them from Soviet domination.

ESCAPE OF TWO LATVIANS FROM A SOVIET FISHING VESSEL.....12

Two young Latvian sailors who have sought assylum in Canada tell of conditions in Soviet occupied Latvia, and the failure of the occupation regime to indoctrinate the Latvian youth with communism.

* * *

REFLECTIONS ON THE PRELIMINARY SOVIET CENSUS REPORT

The preliminary results of the latest Soviet census, taken on January 15, 1959, have now been published by the Central Statistical Board of the USSR. The report puts the present Soviet population at 208.8 million as compared to 190.7 million in 1939. This amounts to an increase of 18.1 million in 20 years. Of the total, 55% is female and 45% male, which is a reflection of war and mass deportations. The census also discloses a remarkable shift from rural to urban population patterns since the introduction of the first five-year plan by Stalin in 1929. While up to that time only 18% of the population lived in towns, the percentage had increased to 33% by January, 1939, and is now listed at 48%. This mass migration from rural to urban communities reflects, first of all, the degree of industrialization which has taken place in the Soviet Union within the last 30 years. But it also serves witness to the revolutionary transformation of its social structure, due to forced collectivization of agriculture, and the introduction of the compulsive labor system which went with it at the same time.

The unprecedented migration which has, and is still taking place in the Soviet realm is by no means a natural "pioneer" movement, nor is it voluntary. While, as the census shows the population of the agricultural districts in the European part of Russia and in the Baltic countries has declined, new mining and industrial communities have sprung up in the Urals, Central Asia, Siberia, and the Far East. It is here that villages and towns are rapidly growing into cities. While the population of the USSR has in general increased by merely 9.5% since 1939, the increase in the Ural District has amounted to 32%, in Western Siberia to 24%, in Eastern Siberia to 34%, in Central Asia to 38%, and in the Far East to 70%.

In order to understand the significance of this demographical and sociological transformation, it must be borne in mind that the Soviet regime has not hesitated to colonize and industrialize the most forbidding regions of its Asiatic and Arctic provinces with utmost speed and ruthlessness, provided they are rich in natural resources and ores. The means applied were based only partly and occasionally on incentive, but were mostly and generally compulsive.

The unvoluntary "settlers" at first were mainly political convicts of "counter-revolutionary" leaning. In the era of Stalin's total collectivization, which necessitated the breaking of "kulak" resistance, the number of deportees grew into millions, and the Lenin code of "corrective labor" appeared inadequate to handle the situation. Hence the idea arose to utilize these huge masses of deportees for construction purposes, such as digging canals, mining ores in climatically inaccessible regions, and the like. Thus slave labor, as a class, was reborn in the 20th century under the ideological guise of "communism". When in the wake of the Second World War, Moscow forcibly and illegally appropriated the territories of the three Baltic countries, Bessarabia, and parts of Poland, these formerly independent nations were made to contribute several million slave laborers to "socialist construction" in the Soviet realm. During the war entire ethnic groups of the Soviet Union were

added to this compulsive labor force. At the war's end followed Soviet occupation and domination of East Central Europe, including East Germany and once again it brought to the Moscow regime a reward in the form of millions of forced laborers, including prisoners of war. Such is the record of the history of the Soviet system in terms of involuntary migration.

*

It is true that many things have changed within the Soviet Union since the death of Stalin. A considerable number of invalided convicts have been released lately. Genocidal mass deportations (with the exception of Hungary) have not been practiced by the Malenkov and Khrushchev regimes. Forced laborers are now being paid wages and granted some individual rights which they did not enjoy before. In other words, there is some improvement and a little more individual freedom.

But this does not mean, as a prominent American gentleman has lately reported from Moscow (N.Y.T.6/3/59) that "Soviet labor camps...are from all available evidence, things of the past". As evidence, he quoted from a recent speech of Mr. Khrushchev, according to which the labor camps have been disbanded: "There still are people in prison for crimes and robbery", he (Khrushchev) said. "But no one wants to use them on construction projects because their labor productivity is very low".

This statement is a gross distortion of facts. Even though Khrushchev might have reorganized, reclassified, and reduced the number of forced labor camps, his "humanity" in releasing incapacitated invalids and old people who cannot earn their keep is based on pragmatic considerations, at the same time forcibly enlisting hundreds of thousands of young "volunteers" for grain production on virgin soil and mining ores in Kazakhstan, Siberia, and elsewhere. There is a difference, to be sure, between the Stalin and Khrushchev regimes, the latter being more reasonable and more rational. But has Khrushchev abolished compulsive labor in actual fact? By no means, nor could he dare to attempt it within the system he governs and represents. What he has done is to modernize Soviet methods of exploiting human labor in order to make it more profitable for the State, and more attractive to foreign observers.

As for Soviet statistics, they contain no real evidence for truly judging the development and future aspects of the Soviet economic and social system. All we know is that since Lenin, truth has been replaced by purposeful propaganda, the objective of which is to gain power over the world, leaving it to the future to make it a happier world. This is the age-old dream of Empire, which on the basis of past history, cannot be accepted by lovers of freedom.

It is here, where the Soviet census of January 1959, much against its basic intent, comes in as a guide to what the Bolshevik revolution has done to the Russian and other peoples under

Soviet domination, and intends to do to other nations who share, or will share its fate of a one party totalitarian rule.

*

The census report begins by presenting a table on total population figures based on the counts of 1913, 1926, 1939, and 1959. The table is complicated by the fact that some of the figures refer to the boundaries of the Soviet Union as they existed on September 17, 1939, but others are linked to its present boundaries, including the forcibly absorbed territories of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldavia (Bessarabia), and parts of Poland and Czechoslovakia which were added to Ukraine and Byelorussia. As for those territories, the census shows that their total population has remained static at approx. 20 million throughout the entire period under consideration. With this in mind, we shall pay attention here merely to those figures which refer to:

Population Changes Within the Boundaries of the USSR of 9/17/39.

1913	(probably December).....	139.9 million
1926	(December 17).....	147.0 "
1937	(January 17).....	170.6 "
1959	(January 15)..... approximately	190.0 "

The census report explains that: "The natural increase of population (excess of births over deaths) in our realm has lately exceeded three and a half million annually". This statement, characterizing the natural growth of the Soviet population, is in accord with appraisals by western statisticians, and Stalin quoted similar figures in 1935.

On closer examination of the figures it appears that the population of Russia has, since 1913, grown by about 50 million within 45 years, which brings about a yearly average of 1,100,000. Even assuning that the natural average growth of population in the USSR since 1914 was only 3 million a year, the population of the Soviet Union within the boundaries of 1939, had there not been foreign wars and the revolution, should amount to 275 million today. Thus the count is short by 85 million inhabitants compared with what should have been expected today. What explanation for this deficiency is possible?

Following the chronology of the table as presented above, we notice that during the 13 year period between 1913 to 1926 the population increased by only 7.7 million. This period includes World War I and the first phase of the Bolshevik revolution, marked by civil war and the clumsy experiments which have gone down in Soviet history as the period of "War Communism". The share of the Russian empire in the toll of military and civilian casualties of World War I has been rated at a maximum of 10 million. Here, however, it must be borne in mind that most of the civilian war victims were nationals of the German occupied territories,

primatily Poland and the Baltic countries, which are not included in the Soviet census pertaining to the 1939 boundaries. The yearly average population growth during this period having been only 600,000, the staggering deficiency in population growth must, therefore, mainly be attributed to the Soviet revolution, including the Civil War.

For the 12 year period between Dec. 1926 and Jan. 1939, the census report lists a population increase of 23.6 million, which comes to a two million yearly average. This was a time of peace for the Soviet Union, but nevertheless the population increased by no more that two-thirds of what it should have. But this period coincides with the introduction of the first five-year plan and collectivization, and the establishment of forced labor as an inherent part of the Soviet economic and social system. It is here where the cause for the relative decimation of population must be sought.

The last period covered by the census is the span of 20 years from 1939 to 1959, during which time the population has grown by approx. one million a year in average. This is two-thirds short of what statistical wizzards predicted. Even assuming that the military and civilian casualties of the Soviet Union (including the forcibly annexed territories) caused by the Second World War and Nazi attrocities amounted to the tremendous figure of 25 million, they still do not explain what happened to many more million people who are missing from the record, as presented by the census. Warren W. Eason, an American statistician, says in his article, The Soviet Population Today (published by Foreign Affairs, July 1959, p. 600): "Nevertheless if we confine ourselves to the period of the war and the years immediately following, and make simplifying assumptions with respect to birth and death rates in the absence of war, the sum total of persons who would not have died plus those who would have been born is in the neighborhood of 45,000,000." He puts the number of persons who died in uniform at 10,000,000.

It is generally known, and has been confirmed by Mr. Khrushchev in his speech to the 20th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party in 1956, that Stalin ordered the deportation and partial extermination of entire nations and ethnic groups, not to speak of the fact that forced labor had reached its peak, in numbers of deportees and in disregard for human life, during the last years of his reign. Here lies the answer to the question.

This article does not aspire to present an accurate statistical account of the death toll in the Soviet realm caused by the Bolshevik revolution. That would be too great a task without thorough statistical research and analysis; but even a superficial examination of the Soviet census leads to the inevitable conclusion that in spite of two devastating foreign wars, the major factor in the disastrous retardation of the natural population growth in the USSR is attributable above all to the war of the

of the Soviet regime against its own subjects. Whatever progress so-called "communism" might achieve in the future, the record of its history will show that never before has a transformation of society been purchased at such an excessive price of misery and waste of human lives.

*

The preliminary census report does not classify the population of the USSR by nationalities. But, according to the figures given for the separate federal republics, the population of the 14 non-Russian states amounts to approx. 43% of the total in the USSR. This is not an accurate proportion between great Russians and minority nations, because many non-Russians live in the RSSR, and many Russians in the non-Russian republics. Previous to World War I the number of Great Russians in the Empire amounted to less than 50 per cent.

The report also fails to provide any information regarding the changes in the national composition of the population which have taken place in the formerly independent nations since 1939, except that the over all population of these territories has remained static at roughly 20 million since World War I. This is unnatural; and indeed, during the peaceful years of independence between the two world wars, their population increased steadily. But there is an easy explanation for the fact that today the total of inhabitants in these Soviet absorbed territories is not larger than in 1914. First, during both world wars, they served as hotly contested battlegrounds in the German-Russian clash of arms. Then during World War II, both occupation regimes indulged in excessive looting and destruction, unlawful conscription and deportation to forced labor — a practice which the Soviets extended even after the war's end. Regarding the Baltic countries, the census report provides the following figures:

Population of the Baltic Republics

	1939			1959		
	Total (in 1,000)	Urban (in %)	Rural	Total (in 1,000)	Urban (in %)	Rural
Lithuania *)	2.880	23	77	2.713	39	61
Latvia **)	1.885	35	65	2.094	56	44
Estonia ***)	1.052	34	66	1.196	56	44

*) Including the city of Vilna and vicinity which the Soviets ceded to Lithuania after having annexed eastern Poland.

**) Excluding the inhabitants of north-eastern Abrene district,

which was annexed by the RSSR after World War II, and the Baltic Germans who emigrated to Germany at the beginning of the war.

***) Excluding the Baltic Germans.

The population increase in the capital cities, as compared to 1939 is as follows, (in thousands): Riga, Latvia - 605 (355); Tallin, Estonia - 280 (175); Vilna, Lithuania - 235 (215). With 56% of the people now dwelling in towns (as compared to 48% in the USSR at large) Latvia and Estonia are today the most urbanized territories in the Soviet realm, while the rural population has decreased, as compared to pre-war times. This urbanization, however, has not been backed up by an adequate housing program, and the bulk of the people is still forced to live in miserable and overcrowded dwellings.

While the provisional report contains no information regarding nationalities in the Baltics, there is ample evidence from other sources that although the native Baltic nations still constitute an absolute majority, a steady influx of Russians since the end of the war has made them a domineering element in the Baltic cities, being utterly disliked even by the rank and file of local communists, much as the top quislings of the Party might indulge in bending to Khrushchev's whims and will.

*

The fate of the Baltic republics under Soviet domination is well illustrated by the example of Latvia, with the exception of minor details. Before the war 25% of Latvia's population consisted of various non-Latvian nationalities: chiefly Russians (10%), Jews (5%), Germans (3%), and Poles (2%). At the beginning of the war most of the Latvian Germans were evacuated by the German Government. During the first Soviet occupation, which lasted from June 1940 to June 1941, the Stalin regime deported or murdered about 35,000 Latvian citizens. In one night alone, on June 14, 1941, 15,000 people - men, women and children - were arrested in their homes for deportation. During the years of Nazi military occupation, many thousands of Latvians were arrested, killed, and deported to forced labor in Germany. Most of the Jews, unless they had fled to the Soviet Union (where many were put to forced labor), were brutally exterminated by the Nazi Gestapo. Both occupation regimes, Soviet and Nazi alike, drafted able bodied men into their armed forces. When the Reds returned in 1944, thousands of Latvians fled to Western Europe and the Scandinavian countries. After the war's end, more than a hundred thousand Latvians had found a haven from Bolshevik persecution in Western Europe. About 50,000 later emigrated to the United States. Of those who remained in their native land, scores of thousands were deported by Moscow to forced labor in two large waves of mass deportations, the one in 1944-1945, and the other in 1949, coincident with the introduction of compulsory collectivization of agriculture.

Soviet genocidal practices in the Baltic countries under the Stalin regime are today a matter of historical record. Various authors have attempted to calculate the population losses of Latvia, caused by the War and mass deportation, endeavoring to arrive at a reasonable total and specific figures according to the factors which were responsible for them. However, due to lack of statistical background, all of these attempts remained sketchy. The best which can be said is that between 1940 to 1950, roughly 25% of independent Latvia's original population perished or was removed from native soil, the Soviet regime of Stalin having been the main reaper.

From the standpoint of demographical interest, the breakup of Latvia's population losses within this 10-year period of hot and cold war may be expressed by the following schematic approximates which by no means pretend to have accurate statistical value.

Refugees and emigrants (including Latvian citizens of German origin)	175,000
Casualties of war, of Soviet slave labor, and Nazi atrocities (including Latvian Jews)	200,000
Deportees to forced labor and involuntary settlement in Russia (of whom a majority may still be alive)	125,000
Total	500,000

This estimate, though necessarily inaccurate in detail, is in regard to total figures even short of Soviet appraisals which at the time of the Munich trials put the number of Nazi war victims in Latvia - meaning the missing population - as high as 600,000.

Latvia is today still Latvian in ethnographical essence, though the alien element of Soviet Russian stock might now constitute one-third of the total population. Apart from natural growth by birth, the number of Latvia's indigenous people has lately increased by at least 5,000 repatriates from forced labor in the Soviet north and east. Their number would have been much larger, were it not that many more thousands had meanwhile succumbed to the hardships of their "re-education" by slave labor. An even greater number of Latvian deportees, besides, is still being forcibly held in eastern labor and detention camps or "settlements" but others remained there voluntarily, realizing that it makes little difference to exchange captivity abroad with utter misery at home.

The core of resistance to Soviet communism and Russianization in Latvia, though being ideologically determined by inspired patriots ("bourgeois nationalists", according to Moscow terminology) is vested basically in the presently bonded agricultural country people of Latvian stock. And so it will remain, as long

as the spirit of resistance to Soviet Russian colonial aspirations continues to dwell within the nation, particularly the Latvian youth, the majority of whom have thus far surprisingly resisted the pressure and blandishments of Soviet Russian propaganda, even though the younger ones have no personal recollection of Latvia's independence. The future of Latvia will depend not so much on its own strength, which by itself is no match to Soviet Russian encroachment, but rather on the attitude and will for survival of the Western free society, symbolized and primarily represented today by American ideals and power.

* * *

KHRUSHCHEV IN RIGA

Nikita Khrushchev's four-day visit to Riga, capitol of Latvia, from June 9 to 12, was no less an international event than his rendezvous with representatives of the communist world in Albania. Even though he, in contrast to the many stereotyped East German and Latvian communist orators, was the only person who could and did speak with authority, he introduced himself in his main address on June 11 with pretended self-denial, by saying:

> I accepted with pleasure the suggestion of the comrades to accompany the delegates of the German Democratic Republic's Party and Government on their visit to the Republic of Latvia. This gave me the opportunity to visit Riga, and to meet you, dear comrades. (CINA 6/12/59)

He distinguished himself from his predecessor, Stalin, also by permitting his East German and Latvian vassals to shower each other with compliments, even before mentioning him by name as the real star of the show. Nevertheless his Latvian underlings, with First Secretary Janis Kalnberzins in charge, gave evidence that they knew their place in the game by delivering their addresses in the Russian language and raising the pitch of their voices when expressing their submission to Khrushchev. While Kalnberzins welcomed Walter Ulbricht and entourage "sincerely", he spoke of Khrushchev with ardently glowing feelings. On June 11, after having for two and a half days benevolently endured a torrent of empty words by his Latvian "hosts" and their East German "guests", Khrushchev was explaining publicly the cold war significance of his surprise appearance in Riga when a thunderstorm descended upon the open forum which was thronged by more than 50,000 "enthus-workers". But, as CINA (6/12/59) put it:

> When comrade Khrushchev had absolved about half of his address, a torrent of rain began to fall. However no one chose to leave. All those present continued to listen intently to what the leader of the Soviet realm had to say.

A wise decision, indeed, for it is easy to imagine what might have happened to anyone so imprudent as to leave, even to save his best suit from ruin.

Khrushchev had plenty to say on that occasion, and he was dead serious. As soon as he had gone through the notions of expressing his admiration for the "famous revolutionary traditions" of the Latvian workers, his next words were chosen for the purpose of sending chills down the spine of the Latvian communist leadership. Said Khrushchev:

> You (Latvians) are known to be hard workers, but you must do better...The Party and Government, as you know, have devised and successfully realized several important measures for increasing the productivity of industry and agriculture, and for promoting the welfare of the people... But there are still some deficiencies, and we cannot ignore them.
>
> Yesterday, while on my way to inspect your electrotechnical industry, I saw queues of women carrying containers at some shops. During the meeting at the factory I inquired: Why do the people of your city stand in line? Voices spoke up saying - For newspapers; for fruits; for milk. Then I was informed that people sometimes stand in line for milk, not because it is unavailable, but because it had not been delivered to town in time as it soon turns sour on hot days. That milk turns sour from heat even our grandmothers knew, so this is no excuse.
>
> It is obvious that something is wrong with the delivery of milk to your town. Why? There is, I am sure, no problem with the production or sale of milk. Rather would I say the fault lies with the managers and workers who are responsible for transporting the milk to the city. They themselves have turned sour on their jobs...

If Khrushchev really was surprised by what he saw, he is apparently ill informed of what is going on in most Soviet cities during the early hours when housewives line up at government stores for whatever foods and necessities can be obtained at prices they can afford to pay on their families' meagre income. Rather it would appear that he, being a man of practical mind, meant to caution his audience that his bold predictions of surpassing the United States in the production of consumers' goods will depend on ever more and harder work, as he indicated by the following:

> Vladimir Illitch (Lenin) taught that high production is the most important factor in bringing about the victory of our new social system. (This is a distortion of Lenin's teachings-Ed.)...On the basis of new technical achievements and constant progress...our country is capable, and

> is going to surpass the level of economic development in the United States of America. Such a victory is not beyond our reach. We have the power now to press for it with maximum energy.

This statement is tantamount to tacit admission that, although the communist block is gaining momentum in terms of military power and aggressive pressure in the cold war, the time when Moscow will be able to compete with free western enterprise in the production and supply of food and commodities to the common working people, is conditioned by their zeal to work harder in support of his regime.

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If we have dwelt here in some detail on Mr. Khrushchev's utterances, meant for interior consumption, it is because the international press, naturally, has concentrated its attention on what significance his appearance in Riga might have in the international field. Everyone knows that Khrushchev is his own Foreign Minister, in spite of Gromiko's filibuster in Geneva where, by the way, he established himself in the mansion of the former Latvian Legation to the League of Nations. The diplomatic motives of Khrushchev in selecting Riga, a major port of the Baltic Sea, for an important foreign policy announcement in the presence of his East German protegé, Ulbricht, were ably analyzed by a Latvian emigré newspaper in West Germany, LATVIA (6/27/59), which said:

> There is no doubt that Khrushchev, by visiting Riga in company of his East German puppets, was inspired by considerations of interior, as well as foreign policy. In regard to the former...it is significant that the Red tzar remained in Riga a day longer, after the men from Pankov had left. (The fact that the first secretaries of the Estonian and Lithuanian Communist Parties were at hand in Riga at that time confirms that Khrushchev had something important to say-Ed.)...
>
> It appears that the East German Punch-and-Judy show, staged by Khrushchev in Riga, was meant as an overture to his forthcoming visit to the Scandinavian countries, to give Stockholm, Copenhagen and Oslo advance notice of what their "distinguished guest" intends to talk about in August. The subject is of rather old vintage. Moscow wishes the Baltic Sea to be a sea of "peace", which means recognition of Soviet domination in that area. In order to bring about this objective, the Scandinavian countries - above all Sweden - must be induced to recognize East Germany de jure. After that the Soviet Union might pressure Poland, East Germany, and the Scandinavian countries into a pact of mutual defense against naval forces of other states. According to Khrushchev, Denmark and Norway have joined the Atlan Pact "by misunderstanding". He maintained that all Scan-

> dinavia should be included in the de-nuclearized zone of the Rapacky Plan. Khrushchev, however, did not choose to mention Soviet installed launching bases for guided missiles in the Baltics, and what he intends to do with them.
>
> The ultimate aim of Khrushchev's Baltic policy, as he disclosed in Riga, and as the Scandinavian press well understood, is to segregate this area from the Atlantic Alliance, and to demilitarize Denmark, Norway and Sweden, or at least to render them defenseless for all practical purposes.

Khrushchev's visit to Riga was also a warning to the stubbornly though passively rebellious Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to abandon hope that the West is either willing or able to liberate them from Soviet domination. Referring to the Western stand in the Berlin issue, he made the following remarks:

> Such an attitude on the part of the Western Powers is unreasonable and unwarranted, detrimental to all nations concerned. It is obvious that the United States and her western allies are trying to conduct a "policy of strength" such as Mr. Dulles devised in his time. Even he realized the futility of it toward the end of his career. Though this "policy of strength" has met defeat after defeat, the West continues to trudge in its wake in an attempt to circumvene important issues, the solution of which is imperative for easing international tension and promoting peace.

Khrushchev's advice to the captive Baltic nations on the occasion of his uninvited appearance in Riga may be formulated in plain words: Abandon hope and trust in the Western Powers to liberate you. Adjust yourselves to your colonial status under communist Mother Russia as best you can, and for your own good. The West has neither the inclination nor the strength to help you.

The day when the Kremlin will be allowed by the West to get away with this sort of propaganda unchallenged will, indeed, be a sad turning point in the destiny of modern human society, perhaps for generations to come.

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in Press

ESCAPE OF TWO LATVIANS FROM A SOVIET FISHING VESSEL

On June 20 two young Latvian sailors, Nilis Bertolds and Adolfs Plenis, both 21, made a dramatic escape from the Soviet fishing ship Njeman, which had anchored at the harbor of St. John's in Newfoundland. Having asked and been granted asylum as political refugees by the Canadian authorities, in spite of protests of the Soviet Embassy, they arrived in Toronto with the assistance of Canadian Latvian organizations on June 28, where they were interviewed by the press and appeared on television. The Canadian Latvian language newspaper, Latvija Amerika, gives the following description of their background (7/6/59):

> Both are 21-years old. They were 1958 graduates of the Riga School of Navigation. After completion of the school's 3 year course of study they went to sea. They mentally alert and speak perfect Latvian. (They also studied Russian and English in school-Ed.). In telling their story they displayed a marked tendency to present the facts truthfully and without exaggeration. One wonders how these young men have been able to preserve sound judgement and integrity under the oppressive communist regime, which governs Latvia by means of false propaganda and brute force. And yet these courageous seekers of freedom are representative of the mood of the Soviet oppressed Latvian youth. This strengthens our belief that the Latvian nation will survive its present predicament under Red rule just as it has stoically endured and overcome alien domination in the past.

When asked the motives behind their desire to escape from behind the Iron Curtain, their answer was plain and unanimous:

> We were seeking liberty and a better life...The interference of the Soviet regime in the affairs of every citizen through constant supervision and intimidation, kills the spirit and makes it impossible to shape one's own destiny. And the distressing material conditions, with almost everything in such short supply, renders the life of an ordinary citizen drab and unsufferable.

Although the fishing vessel Njeman operates from a Latvian harbor, only 11 members of the crew of 75 were Latvians, the rest were Russians. Soviet sailors are, as a rule, not permitted to go ashore in foreign ports. This is a precaution against defection; because, as Bertolds explained, every Latvian (with the exception of the communists and their beneficiaries-Ed.) would take advantage of any opportunity to escape from Soviet bondage. Even though members of the crew have to work an average 12 hour day they must regularly attend meetings of political indoctrination, even taking active part in the discussions in order not to make themselves conspicuously suspect. The two youngsters, employed

as mechanics, earned while at sea a substantial monthly salary of 875 rubles ($87.50 according to tourist rate of exchange). However this was subject to a 20 per cent deduction for their "free" education.

Regarding general conditions in Soviet occupied Latvia, the refugees confirmed what we have reported repeatedly in the pages of this bulletin. Living conditions in the cities have improved somewhat lately. Food and commodities are more abundant than before, although clothing and footgear are still excessively expensive for the average worker. At government stores, where prices are more reasonable, long lines of housewives wait to purchase whatever is available.

Hardest hit by the Soviet system are still the country people whose cash earnings in the kolkhozes are pitifully inadequate. Even though some model kolkhozes prosper, it is of little benefit to the individual agricultural workers who must rely for survival upon their tiny private plots where they may keep a few domestic animals and sell their product on the kolkhoz markets. Even this privilege may be taken away from them at any time.

The collective farmers' resistance is expressed passively by apathy and unwillingness to work almost entirely for the benefit of the government. Ill clad and ill fed, the collective serfs are utterly unimpressed by the communist promises of a better life which, according to the well known propaganda formula, will come to pass within the "next two to three years". The most privileged group among the Latvian producers of food are the fishermen, to which the two young deflectors belonged. Even their professional life is subjected to various restrictions and deductions from their wages.

The influx of Russians into Latvian cities is heaviest in Riga, creating a growing antagonism between the two nations, particularly the youth who frequently fight it out physically over their ideological and national differences.

Church attendance is officially not prohibited except for members of the Communist Party and the Young Communist League. Atheist propaganda, on the other hand, is actively promoted by the Party. Consequently, young people who adhere to the church openly are exposing themselves to the danger of discrimination with regard to employment, and possible political persecution. Communist spies are present at all church services (Editorial note: The ancient St. Mary Cathedral of Riga attracted 5,000 faithfuls on the occasion of a visit by a delegation of West German Lutheran clergymen a few years ago, has recently been taken away from the church to be converted into a concert hall and museum".).

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The two young refugees insisted that Soviet attempts to "re-educate" the Latvian youth in the spirit of communism have failed completely. When asked whether there are many convinced communists among the members of the Communist Youth League, they answered: "We don't know any." They conceded, however, that lip service to the teachings of communism is a necessary requirement for young people who must make a career within the Soviet system.

The communists in Latvia wage a constant propaganda war against America. No one believes the tales of misery and oppression of the American "toiling masses", just as nobody fears "American imperialism", for a considerable number of Latvian's receive gift packages from relatives and friends who have emigrated to the West. They prefer not to mention it in public however, because of possible repressions. The refugees also confirmed the existence of a thriving black market in the larger cities.

Even though the present regime has abolished the worst abuses of the Stalin period, the political police are still alert. Mass deportations are in the past although they are still remembered with horror. However arbitrary arrests and questioning of individuals are still ordinary occurances. It is the unquestionable obligation of citizens to migrate wherever the Government sends them. Hence the young "volunteers" who are sent to till the virgin land in the east.

Whenever and wherever possible, people listen to foreign broadcasts, particularly the Voice of America, and pass the news to their friends. Thus the population is fairly well informed about world events. Hope of eventual liberation by the West has not died; people still adhere desperately to the belief that freedom and justice will prevail eventually.

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